



Quality Policy for the University of Skövde¹

The quality policy was finalised by the Board of Governors on 13-04-2022 and takes effect on the same date.

Registration number HS 2023/147

¹ This is a translation of the Swedish version (Kvalitetspolicy vid Högskolan i Skövde, registration number HS 2022/213). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

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1 Introduction

The University of Skövde (the University) has a responsibility for the quality of its own operations, pursuant to the Higher Education Act (chapter 1, section 4). This responsibility includes ensuring that the University reaches the overarching goals of the operation prescribed by the Swedish government in laws, ordinances and public service agreements, as well as the goals formulated by the University itself based on its own intentions, ambitions and situation. This quality policy outlines, on a general level, the University's quality assurance procedures. The policy was created in harmony with the development plan for the University, thus constituting part of the University's strategic governance. Quality policies have been in place at the University since 1995.

1.1 Definition of Quality

At the University, the term 'quality' is defined as "all the collective qualities of an object or a happening that provide its ability to satisfy various parties' explicit requirements or expectations, to a sufficiently high degree". Quality in education, research, and support and management services means that both national and local goals and requirements are met, to a sufficiently high degree. The 'to a sufficiently high degree' part means that the degree of goals and requirements being met can vary, as not all parts of the operation can be prioritised at the same time. All parts of the operation should, however, be of "high quality". "Very high quality", so-called excellence, is something that is strived for.

1.2 Purpose and Approach of the Quality Assurance Procedures

The purpose of the University's quality assurance procedures is assurance and development of the operation's quality. Quality is assured through adequate conditions in which to run operations, and follow-up thereof. Quality assurance is the basis for quality development. Starting from the follow-up that is done, it is determined what development is needed to maintain and develop the quality of the operation.

The quality assurance procedures shall permeate all operations at the University, and shall be performed on unit and officeholder levels as well as across the University. Staff, students and doctoral students shall – based on their respective roles – actively and systematically contribute to quality in the operations. This approach creates trust-based quality assurance procedures. **Participation, collaboration, systematics** and **trust** are the foundations of the University's quality culture.

An efficient use of available resources shall, pursuant to the Higher Education Act, contribute to quality in the operations. Appropriate and standardised working methods, and well-developed system support should therefore be part of quality assurance procedures. Furthermore, there is a need for analysis of the surrounding world, and comparison with other operations, mainly other higher education institutions and authorities. The University must also, within the framework of the quality assurance procedures, learn how the operations are perceived by external parties.

1.3 Students' and Doctoral Students' Influence on Quality Assurance Procedures

Students and doctoral students are to be given good conditions to exercise influence over operations, mainly in regard to their course or study programme and study situation. The University shall engage and motivate them to take an active part in processes and activities that aim to both ensure and develop quality. The students' and doctoral students' perspectives shall be an integrated part of quality assurance procedures.

2 The University's Quality Assurance System

The quality assurance system is the framework within which quality assurance procedures take place. The quality assurance system includes both conditions and activities that are performed with the purpose of ensuring and developing quality. Activities are performed based on improvement cycles.

The same quality assurance system applies to all operations, i.e., to quality assurance procedures in education, research, as well as support and management services. The quality assurance system also includes university-wide management and governance. The structure of the collective quality assurance system is described in more detail in part 2.3.

2.1 Conditions

The conditions that are important for the operations and their quality assurance procedures are mainly the following: adequate organisation, clear division of responsibilities, appropriate infrastructure, staff competence, financial resources, relevant requirements and goals for the operation, and well-working collaboration with the surrounding society.

The organisation and the division of responsibilities are regulated in Rules of Procedure at the University of Skövde [Arbetsordning vid Högskolan i Skövde], and supplementary organisation and delegation documents. These documents clarify responsibilities of the operation's infrastructure and competence supply. Division of financial resources takes place after the Board's annual budgetary decision. Overall goals for the operation, including goals concerning collaboration, are evident from the six-year development plans. In addition to the development plan, there are a number of other policy documents outlining the requirements, goals and standardised processes and routines of the operation and its quality assurance procedures. A collected catalogue of organisation and policy documents is found on the University's website.

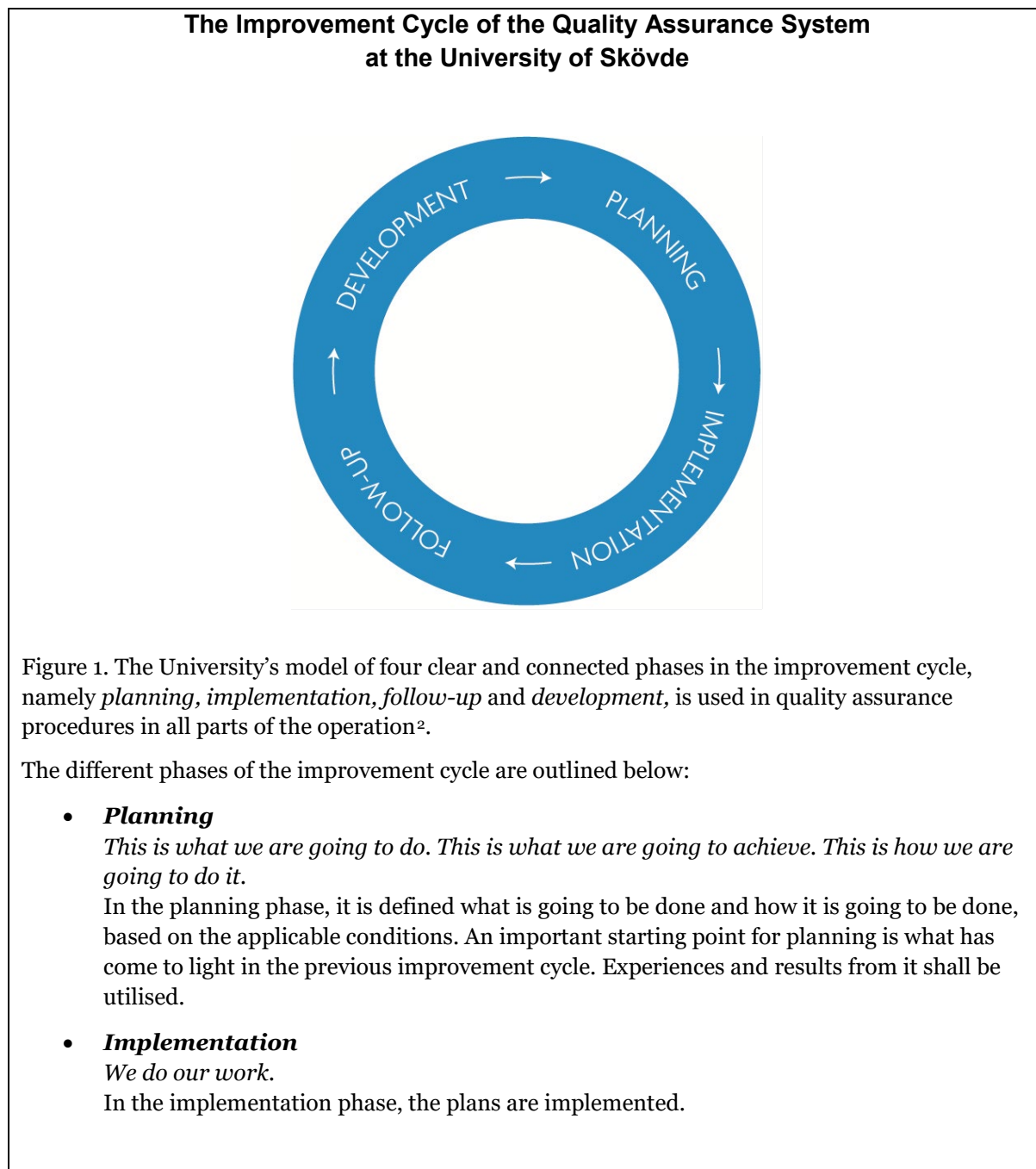
2.2 Improvement Cycles

Quality assurance procedures and quality development take place within the framework of improvement cycles. The University works according to a model of four clear and connected phases, namely planning, implementation, follow-up, and development (see figure 1). The improvement cycles always have operational development as their purpose.

Improvement cycles are used in quality assurance procedures in all parts of operations, in education, research, support and management services, and in university-wide management and governance. Quality assurance procedures in education are characterised by improvement cycles for courses and degree programmes. Improvement cycles are seen in the same way in research, where research projects and research environments are systematically followed up and developed. In support and management services, improvement cycles are

used in staff recruitment processes, and for the assurance of appropriate infrastructure, for instance. Annual operational planning, which is a university-wide management and governance process, is, in itself, a clear example of an improvement cycle.

Through quality assurance procedures on different levels and in different parts of the operations, a culture of quality is stimulated. As is clear from part 1.2, participation, collaboration, systematics and trust are the cornerstones of a culture of quality.



² The model is based on Deming's improvement cycle (the PDSA cycle), which is also one of the foundations of the ISO standards International Organization for Standardization, <https://deming.org/explore/p-d-s-a>

- **Follow-Up**

Did it turn out the way we wanted? Was the goal reached? Why did it turn out the way it did?

In the follow-up phase, the implementation of both the result and the modus operandi are followed up. Reflection on various aspects is included, such as whether the conditions were sufficient, whether work took place in a way that was appropriate and efficient, etc..

Feedback from the follow-up shall be given to relevant parties, and their perception of the result should be taken into consideration.

- **Development**

Now we are going to do this. We will do this instead. This is how we can improve.

In the development phase, it is decided which measures are to be taken, based on the follow-up and reflection that has taken place. It may mean that new operations are to be developed, that existing operations are to be developed further, or phased out. Changes may also be necessary when it comes to conditions and modi operandi. Planned measures are to be communicated to relevant parties.

The development phase is followed by a new planning phase, see above.

2.3 Structure of the Quality Assurance System

In terms of structure, there are three levels to the University's quality assurance system. The levels are outlined below, in text and figure (figure 2).

Level 1: A Cohesive System for all Quality Assurance Procedures

The cohesive system for quality assurance procedures in all operations is outlined in this document, "Quality Policy for the University of Skövde".

Level 2: Implementation of the Quality Assurance System in Different Parts of the Operation

The cohesive quality assurance system is broken down and implemented in the different parts of the operation, according to descriptions in the following policy documents:

- Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Education
- Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Research
- Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Support and Management Services
- Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance

Level 3: Activities

A number of activities are performed in the different parts of the operation – education, research, support and management services, and university-wide management and governance – with the aim of ensuring and developing the quality of operations. The activities can be on a strategic or an operational level. What all the activities have in common is that they are based on improvement cycles (see part 2.2). This means that operations are planned, implemented, followed up, and developed in a systematic way.

The activities are outlined in specific policy documents.



Figure 2: Structure of the quality assurance system at the University of Skövde

2.4 Division of Responsibilities

The Board of Governors and the Vice-Chancellor have an overall responsibility for the University's quality assurance system. Below the Board and Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty Board has an overall responsibility for quality assurance in education and research. Otherwise, the division of responsibilities in quality assurance procedures follows the structure and content stated in Rules of Procedure at the University of Skövde [Arbetsordning vid Högskolan i Skövde], and supplementary organisation and delegation documents. Responsibility for an area always includes responsibility for quality assurance procedures in that area.

The division of responsibilities on a more detailed level is clear from the policy documents that regulate the different activities in the quality assurance system.

2.5 Follow-Up of the Quality Assurance System

The responsibility for following up the quality assurance system, on an overarching level, lies with the Board and the Vice-Chancellor. The principle is that responsibility for quality assurance procedures in an area also includes responsibility for follow-up of the quality assurance procedures that are performed. According to this principle, the Faculty Board is responsible for following up the parts of the quality assurance system that concern education and research.

Follow-up of the cohesive quality assurance system mainly takes place as follows:

Annual Quality Report

The Vice-Chancellor provides an annual quality report to the Board. The report describes the quality assurance procedures that have been performed during the year. Furthermore, a summarising analysis and reflection related to quality assurance procedures in general, and to the University's quality assurance systems, is performed.

Follow-Up via the Included Activities

A continual and integrated follow-up of the system itself takes place within the framework of the various activities that are part of the quality assurance system. The Faculty Board has a special responsibility for such follow-up, related to activities concerning quality assurance of education and research.

Follow-Up Related to the Swedish Higher Education Authority's Inspections

The quality assurance system is followed up by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) in the inspections performed of the University's quality assurance procedures within the framework of six-year cycles. In the year that precedes the inspection, follow-up work takes place at the University in preparation for UKÄ's inspection. If necessary, external support can be used in the preparatory work.

3 Taking Effect

This quality policy takes effect on 13-04-2022. It replaces a previous policy which was finalised by the Board of Governors in April 2020 (registration number HS 2020/335).